

Anthropoid primates from the Oligocene of Pakistan (Bugti Hills): Data on early anthropoid evolution and biogeography

Laurent Marivaux^{*†}, Pierre-Olivier Antoine[‡], Syed Rafiqul Hassan Baqri[§], Mouloud Benammi[¶], Yaowalak Chaimanee^{||}, Jean-Yves Crochet^{*}, Dario de Franceschi^{**}, Nayyer Iqbal[§], Jean-Jacques Jaeger^{*}, Grégoire Métails^{††}, Ghazala Roohi[§], and Jean-Loup Welcomme^{*}

^{*}Laboratoire de Paléontologie, Institut des Sciences de l'Évolution de Montpellier, Unité Mixte de Recherche–Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 5554, c.c. 064, Université Montpellier II, Place Eugène Bataillon, F-34095 Montpellier Cedex 05, France; [‡]Laboratoire des Mécanismes de Transfert en Géologie, Institut des Sciences de la Terre, 14 Avenue Édouard Belin, F-31400 Toulouse, France; [§]Earth Sciences Division, Pakistan Museum of Natural History, Garden Avenue, Shakarparian, 44000 Islamabad, Pakistan; [¶]Laboratorio de Paleomagnetismo, Instituto de Geofísica, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 04510 México Distrito Federal, México; ^{||}Paleontology Section, Bureau of Geological Survey, Department of Mineral Resources, Rama VI Road, 10400 Bangkok, Thailand; ^{**}Département Histoire de la Terre, Unité Mixte de Recherche–Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 8569, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, 8 Rue Buffon, F-75231 Paris Cedex 05, France; and ^{††}Section of Vertebrate Paleontology, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Communicated by F. Clark Howell, University of California, Berkeley, CA, April 27, 2005 (received for review February 8, 2005)

Asian tarsiid and sivaladapid primates maintained relictual distributions in southern Asia long after the extirpation of their close Holarctic relatives near the Eocene–Oligocene boundary. We report here the discovery of amphipithecoid and eosimiid primates from Oligocene coastal deposits in Pakistan that demonstrate that stem anthropoids also survived in southern Asia beyond the climatic deterioration that characterized the Eocene–Oligocene transition. These fossils provide data on temporal and paleobiogeographic aspects of early anthropoid evolution and significantly expand the record of stem anthropoid evolution in the Paleogene of South Asia.

phylogeny | Paleogene | South Asia

For decades, the abundant primate fossils from the Paleogene of Afro–Arabia provided the primary record of early anthropoid primate evolution. However, over the last decade, it has become increasingly clear that Asia (China, Thailand, and Myanmar) also played an important role in the origins and early diversification of that group (1–10). Eocene amphipithecoid and eosimiid primates now figure prominently in models of the early higher-primate radiation. Regardless of the ongoing controversy over their affinities (11–17), notably their anthropoid status, Eosimiidae and Amphipithecidae document a long history of primate evolution during the Eocene of Asia. Such a successful adaptive radiation naturally raises questions regarding the subsequent evolutionary history of Eosimiidae and Amphipithecidae in Asia. In the absence of an adequate Oligocene fossil record from South Asia, it was generally hypothesized that both families may have left no descendant in Asia (18, 19), as was the case for the flourishing Eocene primates from northern continents (adapiforms and omomyiforms), which are virtually unknown during the paleontologically well documented Oligocene (20). Recent collaborative field expeditions (February and March 2000–2004) to the South Gandoi syncline of the Bugti Hills (Balochistan, Pakistan) (Fig. 1) by the Mission Paléontologique Française au Balouchistan and the Earth Sciences Division of the Pakistan Museum of Natural History have enabled us to excavate the primate-bearing locality of Paali Nala (DBC₂). This site is situated in the lowermost levels of the Lower Chitarwata Formation, which is early Oligocene in age (21). During the course of this field work, intensive screen-washing operations have allowed the recovery of several dozen primate fossils (primarily isolated teeth). Here, we describe two previously undescribed genera that we refer to the families Amphipithecidae and Eosimiidae. These fossils extend the stratigraphic range of both families into the Oligocene, thereby underscoring

the taxonomic diversity that was achieved by anthropoid primates in South Asia during the Paleogene.

Systematic Paleontology

Order Primates Linnaeus, 1758; Suborder Anthropeoidea Mirvart, 1864; Family Amphipithecidae Godinot, 1994.

Bugtipithecus, *Gen. Nov.* *Type species.* *Bugtipithecus inexpectans* sp. nov.

Etymology. The genus name refers to the Bugti tribe (Greek *pithekos*, apes).

Diagnosis. As for the type species.

Bugtipithecus inexpectans *Sp. Nov.* **Etymology.** Epithet in reference to the unexpected occurrence of higher primates in the Oligocene of South Asia.

Holotype. UMC-DBC 2174, right M¹ (Fig. 2J), temporarily housed in the Palaeontology Department, University of Montpellier.

Horizon and locality. Bugti Member, Lower Chitarwata Formation (early Oligocene), Paali Nala DBC₂, Bugti Hills (Balochistan, Pakistan; Fig. 1).

Diagnosis. Small-bodied amphipithecoid, similar in size to the modern mouse lemur *Mirza coquereli*. Differs from *Myanmarpithecus*, *Siamopithecus*, and *Pondaungia* (including “*Amphipithecus*”) (7) in having cusps less inflated and more marginally positioned, upper molars with a relatively high degree of “waisting” lingual to the metacone, a stronger hypoparacrista, a complete lingual cingulum, lower molars showing a massive but deeply notched lingual talonid wall (strong postmetacristid and preentocristid), a smaller and more lingually positioned M₃ heel, and in lacking enamel wrinkles on the occlusal surfaces of both upper and lower teeth. Body-mass estimate of 350 g is based on M₁ area (from all primate least-squares regression equation) (22). For hypodigm, description, and metrics, see supporting information, which is published on the PNAS web site.

Comparisons. The Amphipithecidae are generally known to be large-bodied [6–9 kg (*Pondaungia* and *Siamopithecus*)] or medium-sized [1–2 kg (*Myanmarpithecus*)] primates, having upper and lower cheek teeth strongly bunodont with moderately to highly crenulated enamel surfaces. *Bugtipithecus* *gen. nov.* contrasts with the classic amphipithecoid condition in being much

Abbreviations: DBC₂, Dera Bugti locus C₂; UMC, Université Montpellier II Collections.

[†]To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: marivaux@isem.univ-montp2.fr.

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small enamel swelling occurs on a distolingual expansion of the lingual cingulum (*Catopithecus* and *Proteopithecus*). Eosimiids have a similar distolingual expansion of the M^{1-2} talon region but have no hypocone.

The P_4 of *Bugtipithecus* closely resembles that of *Siamopithecus* in being moderately exodaenodont and simply constructed with a low and mesiodistally short talonid (lingually closed by the strong development of the hypocristid) and in having a small and low hypoconid. As in *Siamopithecus*, the trigonid of P_4 in *Bugtipithecus* does not have a distinct paraconid, and the metaconid is present and situated inferiorly and distally with respect to the strong protoconid. The P_4 of *Bugtipithecus* differs from that of *Siamopithecus* in lacking the cristid obliqua and shows a stronger development of the lingual talonid crest. These aspects of P_4 morphology match conditions in eosimiids and differ from conditions in oligopithecids, proteopithecids, propliopithecids, and, to some extent, *Pondaungia*, in all of which P_4 has a stronger metaconid and a more important mesiodistal development of the talonid (broad basin, except for *Serapia*), with the occasional presence of a distinct entoconid (especially in oligopithecids). The P_4 in *Bugtipithecus* further differs from that of oligopithecids in lacking the paraconid. The M_1 and M_3 of *Bugtipithecus* are remarkably similar to those of *Myanmarpithecus* in showing a very strong development of both the postmetacristid and preentocristid, M_1 without any development of the paraconid and hypoconulid and M_3 with a narrow talonid heel that is lingual in position. These aspects of lower molar morphology in *Bugtipithecus* differ from the condition observable in eosimiids, oligopithecids, and proteopithecids, in which the lower molars (notably M_1) possess a paraconid and have a well developed and cuspidate hypoconulid. Lower molars of propliopithecids lack development of a paraconid as well but, in contrast, possess a strong hypoconulid, as in all other early and more recent Old-World anthropoid primates. The absence of a hypoconulid on the lower molars of *Bugtipithecus* and *Myanmarpithecus* is a shared-derived character of both genera but does not characterize all amphipithecids, inasmuch as *Siamopithecus* and *Pondaungia* show weak development of that cuspid.

Family Eosimiidae. Beard *et al.*, 1994.

***Phileosimias* Gen. Nov. Type species.** *Phileosimias kamali* sp. nov.

Included species. *Phileosimias brahuiorum* sp. nov.

Etymology. The name means “the ally of *Eosimias*” (Greek *philios*, ally).

Diagnosis. Eosimiid of the size of *Phenacopithecus*. Upper molars differ from those of *Eosimias*, *Phenacopithecus*, and *Bahinia* in having cusped conules, weaker development of lingual and buccal cingula, less waisting distolingual to the metacone (particularly evident in *Eosimias* and *Phenacopithecus*), and in lacking both hypoparacrista and hypometacrista. Lower molars have the hypoconulid located slightly more lingual to the midline than in other eosimiids, and the P_4 has no mesiolingual cingulid.

***Phileosimias kamali* Sp. Nov. Etymology.** The species name is in honor of our intrepid friend Kamal Madjidulah (Director of *The Star*, Karachi, Pakistan), in recognition of his high efficiency in organizing the French paleontological missions in the Bugti Hills and his efforts toward promoting cultural knowledge in Pakistan.

Holotype. UMC-DBC 2199, right M^1 (Fig. 3F), temporarily housed in the Palaeontology Department, University of Montpellier.

Horizon and locality. Bugti Member, Lower Chitarwata Formation (early Oligocene), Paali Nala DBC₂, Bugti Hills (Balochistan, Pakistan; Fig. 1).

Diagnosis. Differs from *Phileosimias brahuiorum* sp. nov. in being slightly larger, in showing more triangular and distally waisted upper molars, a buccal expansion of the metacone, no hypocone, a massive and lingually inflated protocone, the metacone of M^3

distal to the paracone, and in having less extensive lingual and buccal cingula. Body-mass estimate of 250 g, based on M_1 area (22). For hypodigm, description, and metrics, see supporting information.

***Phileosimias brahuiorum* Sp. Nov. Etymology.** The name derives from “Brahui,” the second Baloch language, in homage to all speakers of this language.

Holotype. UMC-DBC 2221, right M^2 (Fig. 3I), temporarily housed in the Palaeontology Department, University of Montpellier.

Horizon and locality. As for *Phileosimias kamali* sp. nov.

Diagnosis. Differs from *Phileosimias kamali* sp. nov. in having upper molars with more rectangular and transverse outline (not distally waisted), better development of buccal and lingual cingula, the presence of a minute but distinct hypocone, a slender protocone, no buccal expansion of the metacone, and in showing the metacone of M^3 distally more lingual with respect to the paracone. For hypodigm, description, and metrics, see supporting information.

Comparisons. At first glance, when considering upper molars only, *Phileosimias* may appear morphologically divergent with respect to other eosimiids (*Eosimias*, *Bahinia*, and *Phenacopithecus*). Indeed, the presence of cusped conules, weaker development of the buccal and lingual cingula (especially in *Phileosimias kamali*), and the absence of both hypoparacrista and hypometacrista differ from the typical eosimiid dental pattern and could even better match that of omomyiforms (notably *Omomys*). Eosimiids generally exhibit an important distolingual expansion of the lingual cingulum (talon region), have a moderately (*Eosimias* and *Phenacopithecus*) to strongly (*Bahinia*) developed buccal cingulum, and show minute (*Eosimias* and *Phenacopithecus*) to indistinct (*Bahinia*) conules. However, the weak development of buccal and lingual cingula on the upper molars of *Phileosimias* is not uniform within the genus because a couple of specimens attributed to *Phileosimias brahuiorum* show well developed cingula. As in all eosimiids and more generally in early anthropoids (oligopithecids, proteopithecids, parapithecids, propliopithecids, and amphipithecids), both species of *Phileosimias* have upper molars without metaconule cristae (pre-, post-, and hypo-) and postparaconule crista, and lack even rudimentary development of a postprotocingulum (*Nannopithec* fold), common characters in adapiforms and omomyiforms (except *Omomys*). Upper molars of *Phileosimias* show, in contrast, well developed and buccally oriented pre- and postprotocristae (U-shaped protocone), which connect the paraconule and the metaconule, respectively. These teeth also exhibit a buccal expansion of their styler regions (parastyle and metastyle), a feature that is particularly well developed in eosimiids, but which also occurs in some omomyiforms, such as *Macrotarsius*, *Shoshonius*, and *Altiaatlasius*.

The morphology of the lower molars of *Phileosimias* does not depart significantly from that of other eosimiid primates. The main anatomical difference is the position of the hypoconulid, which is lingual to midline in *Phileosimias* and not centrally located, as in *Phenacopithecus*, or slightly buccal to midline, as in *Eosimias* and those omomyiforms that have a hypoconulid. The location of this distal cuspid in *Phileosimias* recalls the condition that occurs in early anthropoids from North Africa (*Catopithecus*, *Oligopithecus*, *Proteopithecus*, *Serapia*, and *Arsinoea*) and sivaladapid adapiforms from Asia (e.g., *Hoanghoni* and *Guangxilemur*), in which the hypoconulid is more lingual and frequently twinned with the entoconid. In *Phileosimias*, as in all anthropoids, the cristid obliqua on M_1 is invariably lateral and reaches the base of the trigonid wall at a point distal to the protoconid rather than distolingual to the protoconid or to the metaconid, as in omomyiforms and adapiforms. Lower molars in *Phileosimias*, as in all other eosimiids, have trigonids that are

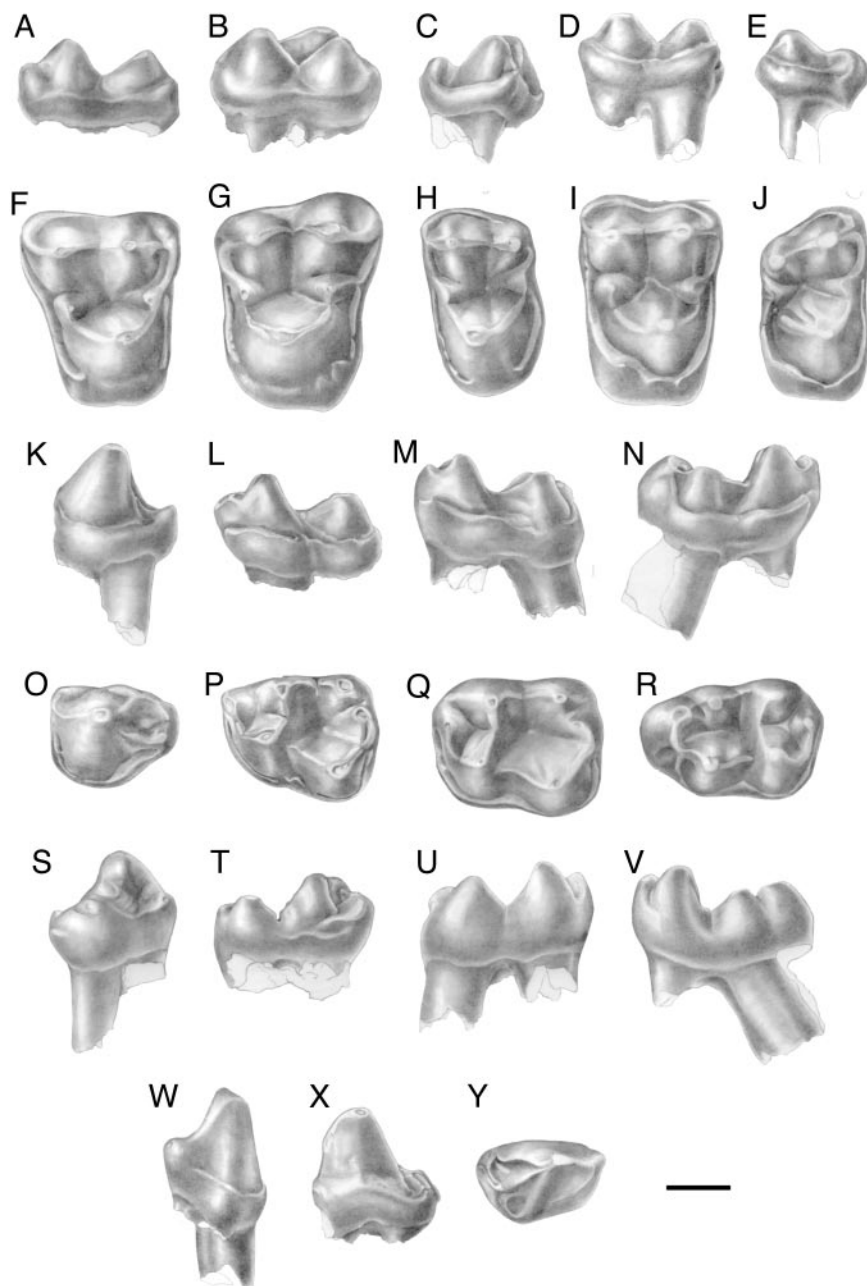


Fig. 3. Eosimiidae from Paali Nala DBC₂. *Phileosimias kamali* gen. sp. nov.: UMC-DBC 2199, right M¹ [holotype]: buccal (A), and occlusal (F) views; UMC-DBC 2197, left M²: buccal (B), and occlusal (G) views; UMC-DBC 2198, left M³: buccal (C), and occlusal (H) views; UMC-DBC 2204, left P₄: buccal (K), occlusal (O), lingual (S), and mesial (W) views; UMC-DBC 2206, left M₁: buccal (L), occlusal (P), and lingual (T) views; UMC-DBC 2207, left M₂: buccal (M), occlusal (Q), and lingual (U) views; UMC-DBC 2208, right M₃: buccal (N), occlusal (R), and lingual (V) views; UMC-DBC 2203, right P₃: lingual (X), and occlusal (Y) views. *Phileosimias brahuiorum* gen. sp. nov.: UMC-DBC 2221, right M²: buccal (D), and occlusal (I) views; UMC-DBC 2220, right M³: buccal (E), and occlusal (J) views. (Scale bar, 1 mm.) Drawings are from L. Meslin (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

open lingually and possess a strongly cuspidate paraconid. Except for M₁, on which the paraconid is commonly reduced in early anthropoids (notably *Proteopithecus*, *Serapia*, *Arsinoea*, *Catopithecus*, and *Oligopithecus*), the paraconid is generally absent on M₁₋₃ and the trigonid is closed lingually in anthropoids (propliopithecids, parapithecids, amphipithecids, pliopithecoids, and platyrrhines). The presence of a paraconid on all lower molars is observed in omomyiforms and tarsiids. In eosimiids, the paraconid on M₂₋₃ is, however, widely spaced from the metaconid and sometimes mesiolingually positioned between the protoconid and the metaconid (in *Phenacopithecus* and

Phileosimias), whereas it is generally mesial and twinned to the metaconid in omomyiforms.

The P₄ of *Phileosimias* is remarkably similar to those of other eosimiids in showing a slight degree of exodaenodonty, a low and short talonid bearing only a small hypoconid distal to the strong protoconid, a minute to crestiform metaconid situated distally and inferiorly with respect to the protoconid, and having a simple swelling of enamel in place of the paraconid. The P₄ of *Phileosimias* shows, however, a talonid that is more pinched buccolingually and with stronger development of the postmetacristid. These aspects of the P₄ metaconid morphology and location differ from conditions

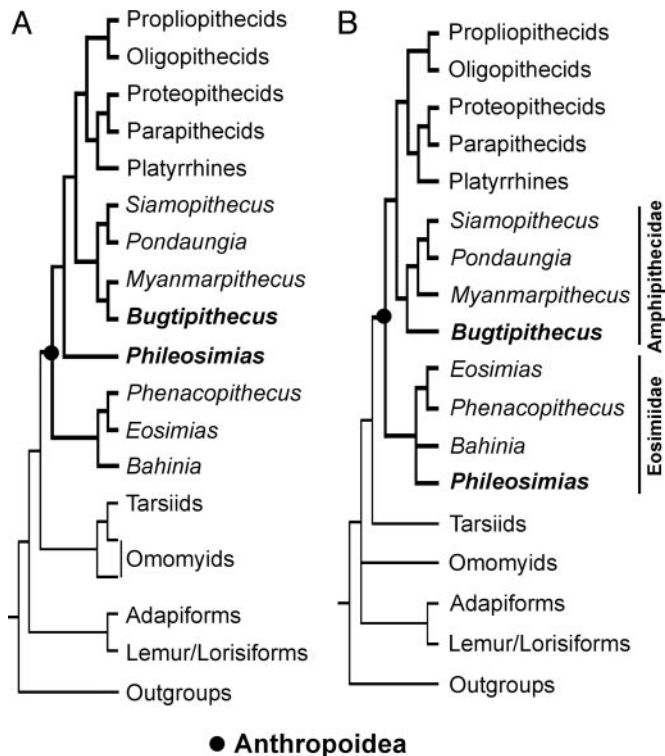


Fig. 4. Results of phylogenetic analyses. Only simplified high-level trees of strict consensus are presented here, showing the main dichotomies among higher taxonomic primate groups (see supporting information). (A) Strict consensus of two equally most-parsimonious trees of 2,810 steps each [consistency index (CI) = 0.273; retention index (RI) = 0.53] obtained from heuristic searches performed on the dataset including some ordered multistate characters (Option 1). (B) Strict consensus of 38 equally most-parsimonious trees of 2,646 steps each (CI = 0.289; RI = 0.51) obtained from heuristic searches made on the same dataset but considering all characters unordered (Option 2).

in other early anthropoids (e.g., proteopithecids, oligopithecids, and propliopithecids), in which this cuspid is relatively much larger and located farther mesially with respect to the protoconid.

Discussion and Conclusions

Until recently, the Oligocene in southern Asia remained undocumented paleontologically. The discovery of a diverse primate fauna in early Oligocene coastal deposits from Pakistan (21), including representatives of sivaladapids (24), lemur-like strepsirrhines (25), eosimiids, and amphipithecids, has revealed an extensive radiation of primates in South Asia, whereas primate communities otherwise disappeared across the Holarctic continents at that time. The late Eocene–early Oligocene interval was, indeed, one of the most significant episodes of climatic deterioration during the Tertiary (26), involving environmental changes that coincide with drastic changes in faunal structure (27, 28). The temporal persistence of primate communities in southern Asia (29–31) was probably mediated by the paleogeography of this Province, which extended into lower latitudes, thus allowing virtually continuous access to tropical refugia during the middle Cenozoic climatic event (32–34). The paleolatitude of the Bugti Hills ≈ 31 million years ago was, indeed, $\approx 14^\circ$ farther south than in recent times (29°N) because of the northward drift of the Indian Plate (35).

The results of our various phylogenetic analyses (Fig. 4), primarily based on morphological characters (see supporting information), consistently point toward the monophyly of a large clade, including Asian Eosimiidae, Amphipithecidae, Arabo–African Oligopithecidae, Propliopithecidae, African Proteo-

pithecidae, Parapithecidae, and South American platyrrhine primates. Assuming this clade to be the Anthropoidea clade (10), from the present evidence, eosimiids and amphipithecids (and by extension *Phileosimias* and *Bugtipithecus*, respectively) are stem anthropoids (17) and, as such, support the hypothesis that Asia was the ancestral homeland of the Anthropoidea clade (1–6, 10). The discovery of *Phileosimias* and *Bugtipithecus* from the Oligocene of Pakistan demonstrates that eosimiids remained highly evolutionary conservative through time and that amphipithecids were very autapomorphic with respect to their coeval African relatives, which had evolved into advanced species with more or less modern anatomy (19, 36–38). This apparent evolutionary disparity between Eocene–Oligocene anthropoids of Asia and Africa suggests that anthropoids must have dispersed rapidly between the two continents (39) just after their common Asian ancestry and evolved in relative isolation on both continents during the Paleogene. The cooccurrence of eosimiids and amphipithecids in Pakistan extends considerably the paleogeographic distribution of both families, which were apparently restricted to Southeast Asia during the Eocene. Their fossil record is still scarce but is now sufficient for demonstrating that anthropoids were a diverse and successful group in South Asia during the Paleogene. A simple examination of body weights of the well known Eocene forms (predicted from the M_1 area) (22) reveals a large spectrum of body sizes (17), ranging from very tiny species [100–400 g (*Eosimias*, *Phenacopithecus*, and *Bahinia*)] to much larger-bodied forms [1–2 kg (*Myanmarpithecus*) and 6–9 kg (*Pondaungia* and *Siamopithecus*)]. *Bugtipithecus* and *Phileosimias* document an unsuspected and more recent phase of the evolutionary history of small-bodied anthropoids in Asia. This discovery presumably provides only a limited perspective on the total anthropoid diversity in this region during the early Oligocene because it represents only one locus, and, furthermore, there is an apparent taphonomic bias because of size sorting regarding large-bodied mammals: only small [*Bugtilemur*, ≈ 100 g (25); *Phileosimias*, ≈ 250 g; and *Bugtipithecus*, ≈ 350 g] to medium-sized [*Guangxilemur*, ≈ 2 kg (24)] primate taxa have been unearthed thus far.

The demonstration that anthropoids persisted in southern Asia raises the critical issue of their subsequent evolution. Early Neogene anthropoid communities from South Asia consist of members of the Dionysopithecidae, a group of primates generally considered as stem pliopithecoids among catarrhine anthropoids (40), which seemingly entered Asia from Africa (19, 40) by the early Miocene (as part of the well known faunal interchanges that occurred as a result of the collision between the Afro–Arabian and Eurasian plates) or even earlier, during the Oligocene (41, 42). The eventual extinction of eosimiids and amphipithecids may have resulted from a phenomenon of competitive exclusion when pliopithecoids arrived in South Asia. However, the possibility of continuity and Asian ancestry for some of the Miocene Asian anthropoids from Paleogene Asian forms (43), although widely contested (17, 19, 40), cannot be totally precluded in the light of these discoveries from the Oligocene of Pakistan. In many ways, the dental morphology of the genus *Bugtipithecus* and, in particular, the morphology of its upper molars, is strikingly reminiscent of that of dionysopithecids, notably *Dionysopithecus shuangouensis* Li, 1978 (44). For instance, upper molars of both taxa exhibit a strong development of the prehypocrista linking the strong hypocone to the post-protocrista, have a strong and continuous hypoparacrista connected to the preprotocrista, which is limited lingually (lack of a labial extension, i.e., preparaconule cristula), and show a labial extension of the anterocingulum (mesial fovea). These upper molar similarities between *Bugtipithecus* and *Dionysopithecus* are not observed in the Propliopithecidae (*Aegyptopithecus*, *Propliopithecus*, and *Moeripithecus*), the group of primates from the Oligocene of Arabo–Africa customarily regarded as stem ca-

tarrhines, in which pliopithecoids are usually nested (40). Upper molars of *Bugtipithecus* differ, however, from those of *Dionysopithecus* in showing an important degree of waisting lingual to the metacone, a minute metaconule, and having a stronger parastyle. Lower molars of *Bugtipithecus* also differ substantially in lacking the pliopithecine triangle but also in lacking a strong hypoconulid and the distal fovea. Additional paleontological data are therefore necessary for evaluating whether these striking dental resemblances between amphipithecids and dionysopithecids are the result of functional convergences related to dietary specializations or are phylogenetically significant apomorphies.

We thank Nawab M. A. K. Bugti, Lord of the Bugti Tribes, for his invitation to visit the Bugti territory; K. Madjidulah for his courtesy and high efficiency in organizing the French paleontological missions in Balochistan; M. de Grosseuvre, former Attaché de Coopération Scien-

tifique et Universitaire (French Embassy, Islamabad, Pakistan) for his great interest in our French–Pakistani collaboration program; K. C. Beard (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh); E. Seiffert (University of Oxford, Oxford) and M. Godinot (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris) for valuable comments and advice on fossils; R. F. Kay and B. A. Williams (Duke University, Durham, NC) for providing the data matrix of their cladistic analysis; K. C. Beard, E. Seiffert, R. Kay, and M. Richard-Marivaux for improving the English version of the manuscript; and L. Meslin [Institut des Sciences de l'Évolution de Montpellier (ISEM)] for artwork. Fieldwork was funded by the program Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique-ÉCLIPSE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (French Embassy, Islamabad). P.-O.A., M.B., G.M., J.-Y.C., and D.D.F. are members of the Mission Paléontologique Française au Balouchistan (MPFB). J.-L.W. and S.R.H.B. are principal investigators of the Bugti paleontological program. L.M. gratefully acknowledges the Fondation Fyssen and the Fondation Singer Polignac for funding his postdoctoral work. This is ISEM publication 2005-045 and MPFB publication 027.

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